



Eminently Unfair?

July 18, 2005

In response to the Supreme Court's ruling in *Kelo v. New London* that states can use eminent domain to transfer private property between individuals or groups, the Congressional Western Caucus has formed a property rights task force.

The task force, which will be headed by Rep. Butch Otter (R-Idaho), is being created to "provide a forum for Members to discuss proposals for enhancing protection of private property rights while helping to draw attention" to the issue, according to a statement announcing its creation.

Otter said that he and the other Members of his caucus have special understanding of the issue. "We in the West understand like few others how precious and fragile our constitutional protections against government intrusion can be," he said in a statement.

Rep. Chris Cannon (R-Utah) asked Otter to head the group, adding that "Congress needs to focus its attention on protecting the fundamental right to own property."

Fund Passes Audit. The Government Accountability Office has given the Capitol Preservation Fund a clean bill of financial health for the 2003 fiscal year, according to a financial audit released last week.

The fund - the financial arm of the Capitol Preservation Commission - raises money for improvements, preservation and acquisitions of artwork and other property in the Capitol. The fund's mission also includes helping defray the cost of the construction of the Capitol Visitor Center.

Last week's report noted that in fiscal 2003 the fund's financial statements were "in conformity with U.S. generally accepted accounting principals."

Between fiscal 2002 and 2003 the net assets of the fund grew from \$62 million to \$72 million. Between fiscal 2002 and 2003 the fund achieved a growth of more than \$25 million, mostly due to the sale of two commemorative coins during that financial year.

- John McArdle and Sonny Bunch